

## CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1 through 10 (canceled)

11. (Currently amended) A method for preparing a stable  $\alpha$ -aluminum oxide protective layer for (i) an aluminum-containing alloy foil Fe-Al or Ni-Al having a thickness of 0.003 to 0.1 mm and an Al content of at least [[about]] 8% by weight or for (ii) an aluminum-containing alloy foil Fe-Cr-Al or Ni-Cr-Al having a thickness of 0.003 to 0.1 mm and an Al content of at least [[about]] 3% by weight, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) depositing Ni, Fe, Cr or Ti on the surface of the aluminum-containing alloy foil (i) or (ii) in an oxygen atmosphere to form on the aluminum-containing alloy foil, an oxide layer of a non-aluminum-containing oxide having a thickness of up to 1000 nm effective to suppress formation of metastable forms of aluminum oxide; and

(b) heating the aluminum-containing alloy foil (i) or (ii) on which is formed an oxide layer of a non-aluminum-containing oxide to a temperature of at least 800° C, whereby the oxide layer of the non-aluminum-containing oxide acts on the surface of the aluminum-containing alloy foil (i) or (ii) as a nucleating agent to promote formation of the stable  $\alpha$ -aluminum oxide while suppressing formation of metastable forms of aluminum oxide.